

THEDWASTRE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health,

1920.

STOWMARKET:

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*To the
Chairman and Members
of the
Thedwastre Rural District Council.*

STOWMARKET,

April, 1921.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present to you the Annual Report on the health of the Thedwastre Rural District for the year ending December 31st, 1920.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

Population.—(Census 1911) 9018. (Estimated 1920) 8513.

Physical Features and General Character of District.—Inland—generally flat—watered by a few small streams—soil of a mixed character, mostly fertile and well cultivated, with several small woods and some pits of chalk, gravel, flint, sand and brick earth.

Social Conditions.—The occupation of the inhabitants is almost entirely agricultural; but district contains one Bacon Factory, one Bat Factory and 2 small Brick Works. There are 20 villages, no town. There are no large estates, the district being mainly divided into small farms, few exceeding 300 acres.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Birth Rate 23·49 per 1000.	Birth Rate. —There were 200 births in 1920 (males 104, females 96), giving a Birth Rate of 23·49 per 1000 in 1920 compared with 20·52 ,, 1919 16·43 ,, 1918 14·56 ,, 1917 and 20·4 ,, 1916
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The Birth Rate for England and Wales was 25·4 per 1000 in 1920. There were 11 illegitimate births.

Death Rate 10·68 per 1000.	Death Rate. —There were 91 deaths (males 51, females 40), giving a Death Rate of		
		10·68 per 1000 for 1920	
	compared with	13·92	1919
		15·8	1918
		17·11	1917
	and	14·0	1916

The Death Rate for England and Wales was 12·4 per 1000 for 1920.

Infant Mortality 35·00 per 1000 nett births.	Infant Mortality. —There were 7 deaths of infants under one year of age, giving an Infant Mortality of		
		35·00 per 1000 nett births in 1920	
	compared with	51·42	1919
		107·91	1918
		61·53	1917
		39·00	1916
	and	96 00	1915

The rate for England and Wales was 80 per 1000 nett births in 1920. Of these 7 deaths of infants, 6 were registered as "Premature Birth," and 1 as "Debility from Birth."

Other Causes.—There was 1 death from Influenza, 4 from Pulmonary Tuberculosis, 17 from Cancer, and 15 from Heart Disease.

It will be noted that the Birth, Death and Infant Mortality Rates are far more satisfactory than they have been for many years.

Poor Law Relief.—The number of paupers and scale of relief accord with the average of the country.

Hospitals, &c.—There is no Hospital in the district, but serious cases requiring hospital treatment are sent to the County Hospital at Bury St. Edmunds.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT.

Water.—The water supply of the district is derived from wells (mostly shallow) and ponds. The following villages have public wells maintained by the District Council:—Ashfield Magna, Beyton, Hinderclay, Rattlesden and Woolpit. The Council also maintain public ponds at Rattlesden and Drinkstone. The supply is generally adequate and the quality fair. Some sources are liable to contamination by surface drainage if tenants of adjoining dwelling, &c., neglect the same, and in some cases notices have been served in respect thereof.

Rivers and Streams.—These are small, and there is not much pollution; but it was found necessary to take action in one case during a dry period.

Drainage and Sewerage.—There is not much drainage worthy of the name, and the usual methods of sewage disposal is by discharge into open ditches and cesspools. The cottages generally are without drainage. Parts of Elmswell and Woolpit are sewered. The conditions are not scientific, but the scattered and open character of the district generally prevent any serious nuisances and make any general scheme of sewerage impossible.

Closet Accommodation.—Chiefly privies and pail closets. Orders are given for the conversion of privies into pail closets on discovery of nuisance, and for provision of additional accommodation when found insufficient. Approximate number of pail closets, 454; privies, 1208.

Scavenging.—There is no collection of house refuse. The usual method of disposal is by deposit in a bumby-hole. Nuisances frequently arise through tenants neglecting to empty these holes when necessary and remove contents to their allotments.

Sanitary Inspection of District.—Number of premises visited, 784; defects or nuisances discovered and preliminary notices for abatement served, 97; statutory notices, 3.

Result of service of notices.—17 have not yet been complied with. There is still great difficulty in getting necessary work executed owing to the high charge for labour and materials, also to the selling of property as at present going on.

Nature of Inspections.—Nuisances caused by accumulations of manure, &c., animal nuisances, ditches used as drains, foul closets, defective privies, defective drains, dirty premises, overcrowding, structural defects of dwellings such as unrepaired roofs, damp walls and floors, absence of eaves, gutters, &c.

It is interesting to note that the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings acquired two cottages at Drinkstone with a quarter-of-an-acre for £25, and carried out repairs and improvements costing £675. One of these cottages was in a very dilapidated condition and had not been occupied for years. These have now been re-thatched, sculleries provided, also pantries and a fireplace in at least one bedroom in each cottage, new floors in living rooms, and an earth closet for each. The rent of one of these cottages before the War was £3 15s. 0d.

Two cottages were erected during the year, at Woolpit and Tostock.

A landlord in one of the parishes has made some improvement in his cottages, work upon which is still being carried out; he has also demolished 8 old cottages, on which Closing Orders had been issued.

Two samples of water were submitted for analysis.

Premises and Occupations controllable by regulations.—There are no byelaws in force in the district except in respect of dairies and cowsheds. There are 2 knackers' yards, one bacon factory, and 10 other slaughter-houses. These are frequently inspected and kept in good order. Complaints were received during the summer that a watercourse was fouled with the effluent from the sewerage works at the Bacon Factory, the works consist of a liquefaction tank, one of Tuke & Bell's automatic revolving sprinklers, which distributes the liquid over a filter bed then to the ditch and water course. It was reported to the Council that the filter did not purify the matter sufficiently, the effluent not being a good one. As a result of the Council taking this matter up an additional filter bed with sprinkler was put down.

Schools—There are 20 public Elementary Schools which were visited during the year with reference to the sanitary accommodation. The water supply is fair. The Council School at Elmswell was closed in June owing to Scarlet Fever.

FOOD.

Milk Supply.—The district is supplied by local producers who also export a considerable quantity. The County Police take samples for examination. The supply as a whole is abundant and wholesome. Residents in most cases have to fetch their own milk from the farms.

Milk (Mother's and Children) Order, 1919.—No action has been found necessary under this order.

Other Foods.—At the Elmswell Bacon Factory 6913 lbs. of meat have been condemned for tuberculosis. The Government Slaughter House here was given up in June.

PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

Infectious Diseases generally.—The following cases were notified during the year :—

Scarlet Fever 13 (3 removed to Isolation Hospital)

Diphtheria 1 (removed to Isolation Hospital)

Erysipelas 6

Cerebro-spinal Fever 1

Para-typhoid 1

Malaria 1 (discharged soldier)

Tuberculosis 15 (14 lungs)

There is still some difficulty in getting cases removed to the Isolation Hospital.

12 of the cases notified as Scarlet Fever were resident in Elmswell, all occurred in June and July, were all notified by the same Medical Practitioner, and he, the County Medical Officer and myself all agreed later that they were not typical cases of Scarlet Fever but probably the so-called Fourth Disease. Therefore we were left with one case of true Scarlet Fever and one case of Diphtheria, which was satisfactory. The case of Cerebro-spinal Fever was resident in Elmswell, in the same house as a case notified in October 1917, has been fully reported to the Ministry of Health ; this case recovered without any permanent paralysis, and there was no spread of the disease.

Tuberculosis of the Lungs is still very prevalent.

There was no recurrence of any Influenza epidemic.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

There is no consultation and treatment centre, the parishes being very scattered, but health visitors are employed in this work by the West Suffolk County Council.

NURSES.

The Suffolk Nursing Association have Nurses in most of the parishes, 3 or 4 parishes being linked together for this purpose.

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

Staff.—A local part-time Medical Officer of Health, a Sanitary Inspector and Inspector of Nuisances.

Isolation Hospital.—Stowmarket Isolation Hospital serves three districts, i.e., Stowmarket Urban, East Stow Rural, and Thedwastre Rural, under a joint agreement.

Total number of beds, 24, contained in 4 wards.

Total cases admitted during year, 26.

From Stowmarket Urban District.—Diphtheria 8, Scarlet Fever 1; 2 deaths from Diphtheria.

From East Stow Rural District.—Diphtheria 5, Scarlet Fever 8.

From Thedwastre Rural District.—Diphtheria 1, Scarlet Fever 3.

Electric Light has just been installed throughout the Hospital; but we are still without a Mortuary, and there is no bathroom.

There is a thoroughly up-to-date Steam Disinfecting Plant.

The Hospital is well managed by a fully-qualified Matron who has a Probationer to assist.

Chemical and Bacteriological Examinations are carried out free if necessary by the Public Health Department at Bury St. Edmunds.

HOUSING.

General Housing Conditions in the District.—

(1) Number of houses—2119.

Number of working class dwellings—1737.

New houses for working classes erected—2, in course of construction—8.

(2) (a) **Extent of shortage**—It was estimated in 1919 that 200 houses are needed to meet existing shortage and abate overcrowding.

(b) Measures taken or contemplated to meet shortage—Plans have been prepared for 200 houses, and building has started at Beyton and Tostock on 8 houses.

Building has also started (February 1921) on 32 houses at Elmswell and Norton.

- (3) Population (Estimated for 1920)—8513. No important changes have taken place during the year; nor are any anticipated in the future.

Overcrowding.—

- (1) Extent—Practically the same as reported on in 1919.
- (2) Causes—Insufficient bedroom accommodation and shortage of houses for larger families.
- (3) Measures to deal with overcrowding—The only measures practicable under existing conditions is the provision of new houses with 3 bedrooms. Any cases reported during the year have been told to apply for a new cottage if building is going on in their parish.
- (4) Principal cases of overcrowding dealt with during the year and action taken.—Action taken as above.

Fitness of Houses.—

- (1) (a) General standard of housing in district—low.
(b) General character of defects in unfit houses—excessive dampness of walls and floors, insufficient height of bedrooms, &c.
- (2) Action taken under—
(a) Public Health Acts—Nil.
(b) Under Section 17—Nil.
- (3) Difficulties in remedying unfitness—Many cottages belong to poor persons who are unable to meet high cost of repairs, and necessary alterations in many cases cannot be executed without displacement of tenants, who under existing conditions cannot obtain other accommodation.

Statistics for 1920.—

- (1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which complaints were made that they are unfit for human habitation.
(a) By Householders—2.
(b) By Parish Councils—Nil.

- (2) Action under Section 17 of the Housing Act of 1909.
 - (a) Number of dwelling houses inspected under and for the purpose of the section—5.
 - (b) Number considered unfit for human habitation—5.
 - (c) Number of defects in which were remedied without the making of closing orders—Nil.
- (3) Action under Section 28 of Housing Act, 1919.
 - (a) Number of orders for repairs issued—Nil.
 - (b) Number in which repairs carried out by local authority—Nil.
 - (c) Number of dwelling houses voluntarily closed on notice by owner that they could not be made fit without reconstruction—Nil.
- (4) Closing orders—
 - (a) Number of representations made to local authority with a view to making of closing orders—5.
 - (b) Number of closing orders made—Nil.
 - (c) Number of dwelling houses under closing orders made fit for human habitation—Nil.
- (5) Demolition orders—Nil.
- (6) Number of dwelling houses demolished voluntarily—15.
- (7) Obstructive buildings—Nil.
- (8) Staff engaged in housing work—Medical Officer of Health and Housing Inspector.

Nuisances reported during the year.—

Accumulations of manure and refuse	...	...	9
Animal nuisances	...	...	3
Ditches	...	...	5
Complaints	...	...	17
Nuisances from foul closets	...	...	18
Defective drains	...	...	4
Defective privies	...	...	17
Dirty premises	...	...	3
Overcrowding	...	...	3
Number of privies converted into pail closets	...	...	8
Number newly constructed owing to insufficient accommodation	...	...	7
Other nuisances in connection with houses	...	...	36
Other nuisances in connection with water	...	...	3
97 informal notices were served, 17 of which are still in hand.			

APPENDICES.

HOUSING CONDITIONS.

STATISTICS.

1.—GENERAL.

(1)	Estimated Population	...	...	...	8513
(2)	General Death Rate per 1000	...	...	...	10·68
(3)	Death Rate from Tuberculosis per 1000	...	...	...	·469
(4)	Infantile Mortality per 1000 nett births	...	...	...	35·0
(5)	Number Dwelling Houses of all classes	...	...	...	2119
(6)	Number of Working Class Dwelling Houses	...	...	...	1737
(7)	Number of New Working Class Houses erected	...	...	...	2

2.—UNFIT DWELLING HOUSES.

I.—Inspection.

(1)	Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects under Public Health and Housing Acts	...	...	...	784
(2)	Number of dwelling houses which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations 1910	...	...	...	<i>nil</i>
(3)	Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	...	...	...	90
(4)	Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-heading) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	...	...	...	<i>nil</i>

II.—Remedy of Defects without Service of formal Notices.

Number of defective dwelling houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers	<i>nil</i>
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III.—Action under Statutory Powers.

A—*Proceedings under Section 28 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c., Act, 1919.*

(1)	Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs	<i>nil</i>
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|-----|--|--|------------|
| (2) | Number of dwelling houses which were rendered fit, | | |
| | (a) By owners | | <i>nil</i> |
| | (b) By Local Authority in default of owners | | <i>nil</i> |
| (3) | Numbers of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close | | <i>nil</i> |

B—Proceeding under Public Health Acts.

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|-----|---|------------|
| (1) | Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied | 97 |
| (2) | Number of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied | |
| | (a) By owners | 80 |
| | (b) By Local Authority in default of owners | <i>nil</i> |

C—Proceeding under Sections 17 and 18 of the Housing, Town Planning, &c., Act, 1909.

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|-----|---|------------|
| (1) | Number of representations made with a view to the making of closing Orders | 5 |
| (2) | Number of dwelling houses in respect of which closing orders were made | <i>nil</i> |
| (3) | Number of dwelling houses in respect of which closing orders were determined, the dwelling houses having been rendered fit | <i>nil</i> |
| (4) | Number of dwelling houses in respect of which demolition orders were made | <i>nil</i> |
| (5) | Number of houses demolished in pursuance of demolition orders | 16 |

In conclusion, I should like to thank the Chairman and Members of the Council for the consideration they have shown me, and the Sanitary Inspector for the information he has given me in connection with his work during the year.

Yours faithfully,

S. C. HOUNSFIELD,

Medical Officer of Health.